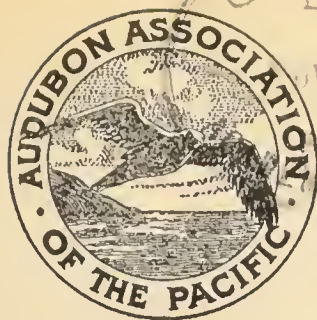


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NUMBER 11

Feeding Habit of Bonaparte Gull

Among different species of birds there are different methods of getting food. In fact, most have more than one way of food hunting, gleaning, or gathering. A study of the feeding habits of any species leads to so many curious and surprising little facts that even the commonest have not been thoroughly investigated in this regard. Watching such birds as the English Sparrow, I am frequently amused to note new ways and means of earning a living which had never come to my attention before. I was recently surprised to discover an interesting habit of the Bonaparte Gulls (*Larus philadelphia*) of the Bay region. Though these activities are probably regular enough, they seem worth referring to in a little detail.

Fox Sparrows, Quail, and Snowy Egrets are well known for their scratching technique in the hunt for food. Believing Gulls incapable of Quail-like, Sparrow-like, or Heron-like manners, I was interested to note (early this spring) Bonaparte Gulls apparently using their feet in search of food.

The Gulls stood in shallow water which came about up to the belly. They appeared, at first glance, to be rocking back and forth, shifting their weight from one foot to the other very rapidly. This rocking created a little disturbance in the muddy water. From time to time the birds would dip their bills quickly into the whirl at their feet and apparently take something up. My attention having been directed to this, I was on the watch to learn some more about it, and discovered, by observing birds in very shallow water, that the "rocking" was really a sort of running in place without moving forward.

Discussion and reference to literature reveal that such activity is not uncommon among the Gulls. Several reasons are advanced to explain its immediate mechanics (the water is muddied so that small fish are confused and easily captured; fish are caught as they flee from the little turbulence; smaller types of animal life, or plant life, are brought to the surface where they can be taken easily), but none of these ideas has been put to the test and we still don't know exactly what goes on at the feet of a "treading" Gull.

My observations seem to indicate that the habit is commoner during the early spring than in the fall. This difference may, however, be due to conditions of slightly higher water or lack of food in the areas that I have been watching along the eastern shore of San Francisco Bay. It would certainly be interesting to see if *Larus philadelphia* hunts in this same way throughout the winter in other parts of the Bay area where they congregate from time to time in shallow ponds and estuaries.

David Gelston Nichols, 1713 Dwight Way, Berkeley, California. October 16, 1940.



October Field Trip

The October field trip was held Sunday, the thirteenth, when we again returned to the Lake Merced region. The weather was beautiful and fine birding

resulted. Five members and two guests attending made up a group of just the right size to allow good observations. Had there been less activity about the lake, our list probably would have soared considerably higher than it did. Golfers, boatmen, fishermen, skeet shooters, and just plain "Sunday tourists" were all on hand in large numbers to take advantage, even as we, of the fine weather.

The old route through "Bryant Canyon" was used, which resulted in the California Jay and the Wren-tit appearing early on our list. Black Phoebes were outstandingly numerous and one Say Phoebe was later seen on the site of the new State College. Fine views were obtained of most of the species noted, as exemplified by a Barn Owl which sat in almost complete direct sunlight in one of the pines above the pumping station. The presence of Golden-crowned Kinglets and some beautiful Townsend Warblers did much to dispel our disappointment over not finding the Winter Wren, Brown Creeper, and two Clapper Rail, all of which had been seen there the day before.

While our species list is up to average, a census would probably tell a more true story of birding conditions at the lake. High water and intensive boating on both lakes are a poor combination for the water birds. A few Mallards, probably a dozen Ruddy Ducks, an equal number of Baldpate, and three Ring-necked Ducks were all that we could find on both the lakes. Only the dauntless Coots remained in undiminished numbers. One Wilson Snipe was seen, thanks to an elusive Marsh Wren which drew us down close enough to scare out the Snipe. Northern Phalaropes, abundant the day previous, were not recorded at all, while many Heermann Gulls in nice plumage were indeed a welcome surprise.

A last minute effort to locate the Creeper and Winter Wren failed, but did result in our finding another Barn Owl and a pair of Ravens which brought our species list to sixty-one and very nicely rounded out the day. Species noted:

Western Grebe	Heermann Gull	Audubon Warbler
Eared Grebe	Barn Owl	Townsend Warbler
Pied-billed Grebe	Anna Hummingbird	Yellow-throat
Farallon Cormorant	Belted Kingfisher	Red-winged Blackbird
California Heron	Red-shafted Flicker	Tri-colored Blackbird
Mallard	Say Phoebe	Western Meadowlark
Baldpate	Black Phoebe	Brewer Blackbird
Ring-necked Duck	Horned Lark	Purple Finch
Ruddy Duck	California Jay	House Finch
Sharp-shinned Hawk	Raven	Willow Goldfinch
Cooper Hawk	Chickadee	Green-backed Goldfinch
Red-tailed Hawk	Bush-tit	Pine Siskin
Sparrow Hawk	Wren-tit	Spotted Towhee
California Quail	Bewick Wren	Savannah Sparrow
Virginia Rail	Tule Wren	Fox Sparrow
Coot	Hermit Thrush	Junco
Killdeer	Golden-crowned Kinglet	White-crowned Sparrow
Wilson Snipe	Ruby-crowned Kinglet	Golden-crowned Sparrow
Western Gull	Pipit	Song Sparrow
Herring Gull	California Shrike	Lincoln Sparrow
California Gull		

Members attending were Misses Blake, MacIver; Messrs. Bolander, Kirker, Myer; and two guests, Richard Blumberg and Edward Lobes.

Gordon Bolander, Leader and Historian.



Adaptability of Night Herons

In the study of bird conservation, it is of considerable value to know the relative adaptability of different species to conditions of a changing landscape. Obviously a Sparrow Hawk is not sensitive to the draining of a swamp as long as there are some sorts of rats, mice, or insects left for it to feed upon. On the other hand, Rails would be largely eliminated on a drained, dry terrain. Never-

theless, one is frequently amazed by the changes and extremities that various types can put up with. It has often been a matter of wonder to me that some tropical and sub-tropical birds of prey not only survive, but manage to reproduce, when transported by man to the inclement weather of high latitudes. How strange it is to see Vultures from Central Africa fighting, building nests, and rearing young in the unheated cages of the London Zoölogical Gardens, where they are exposed not only to low temperatures and London fog but also to the penetrating curiosity of British youth. Cases of adaptability closer to home have recently come to my notice. They are interesting enough, I think, to be worth a little attention.

Some time ago *Eucalyptus viminalis* was introduced into California. This tree was so successful in its new home that Eucalyptus groves are now one of the most prominent landscape features in the San Francisco Bay region. To estimate the effect on bird life of this vigorous introduced tree would be a matter calling for some research. Nevertheless we can often see these trees used in obvious ways by some birds. The Black-crowned Night Heron (*Nycticorax nycticorax*) appears to be one interesting Eucalyptus tenant.

Close to the Berkeley Aquatic Park, between two large factories, at the edge of the main Southern Pacific Railroad tracks running into Oakland is a small grove of about a dozen tall Eucalypti. The lower branches are swished about by the air currents from the freight and cross-continental passenger trains that roar by all day long; the upper branches are often filled with coal smoke from trains and factory chimneys; but despite these things they have been used as a day roost for several months now by half a dozen Night Herons, which hunt in the man-made Aquatic Park from evening until the morning mist has been burned off. You and I would find it difficult to catch some sleep with such a clatter and whistling going on. *Nycticorax*, however, pulls his head down between his shoulders and philosophically disregards our busy world as he blinks and dozes 80 feet or so above the tumult of our civilization.

One can view similar situations in big cities where great masses of Starlings come in to the noisy world of man to roost at night. The Metropolitan Museum, in the middle of New York, has often sheltered thousands of sleepy Starlings night after night. But *Sturnus* has the advantage of *Nycticorax* in that the Starling's habits coincide more nearly with our own—hunting by day, sleeping by night,—whereas the Night Heron must put up with the full force and noise of daytime activity. I take off my hat to *Nycticorax*.

David Gelston Nichols, 1713 Dwight Way, Berkeley, Calif. Oct. 18, 1940.



Audubon Notes

November Meeting: The regular meeting will be held on Thursday evening, the 14th, at 8 o'clock, in the Ferry Building.

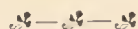
The speaker will be Mr. Joseph Dixon, whose topic will be "Endangered Species." The lecture will be illustrated with Kodochrome slides.

Members may bring guests.



November Field Trip will be taken to Lake Lagunitas, Marin County, Sunday, the 17th. Buy round trip ticket to Fairfax or Ross, and take the 8:15 a. m. Sausalito Ferry. Watch for possible change in travel from ferry to bus.

Those taking the easier trip meet leader, Mrs. Courtright, at Ross Station; the longer trip will be from Fairfax via Porteous Canyon and over the hills. Bring luncheon. Miss Frances Blake, Chairman of Outings, requests each member bring at least one interested friend.



October Meeting: The 278th regular meeting was held on Thursday, the 10th, in the Ferry Building, with forty members and guests present. President B. K. Dunshee presided.

Mr. David G. Nichols, the author of two articles appearing in this issue of

THE GULL, has been appointed Associate Editor.

Observations were reported by David G. Nichols and Frank G. Watson, of three Pomarine Jaegers and an Arctic Tern, September 27th, at Berkeley Aquatic Park, the tern being last seen on October 5th. A Common Tern also has been seen there for some time.

Dr. and Mrs. Eric T. Reynolds showed several reels of colored motion pictures taken in various parts of California.

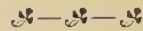
These covered birds, nests and habitats and some of the very interesting ones were of nesting colonies of White Pelicans on Tulare Lake, shore birds along our shores and Wood Ducks with their family raised in the Reynolds' garden in Piedmont.



Observations: Mrs. Courtright reported that Mrs. E. B. Gearhart, of San Rafael, had Golden-crowned Sparrows in her garden September 19th, and that Mr. Glenn Ensign noted six in Tamalpais Valley on the 23rd. Mrs. Ensign saw in her garden in San Rafael a Townsend Warbler and a Ruby-crowned Kinglet on the 24th.

Mrs. Junea W. Kelly reported: Alameda, Audubon Warbler, September 16th. Hermit Thrush, Puget Sound

White-crowned Sparrows, October 1st; Oakland, three Red-backed Sandpipers, September 18th; Las Trampas Creek, Moraga, Townsend Warbler, Fox Sparrow, 22nd; Berkeley campus, Mockingbird, Aquatic Park, Pomarine Jaeger, 29th; Marin County, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Olive-sided Flycatcher; Sears Point Cut-off, Pipit, Shovellers, three Short-eared Owls, October 6th; two male Wood Ducks, Golden Gate Park, October 5th.



Resurgence of an Old Evil

In the September-October *Bird Lore* appears an alarming article by Richard H. Pough under the title, "Massacred for Millinery." It was supposed that traffic in bird plumage had been stopped by legislation years ago, but evidently vigilance is necessary to keep down any illegal business which can be made to pay a profit.

This article lists feathers taken from the Condor, Golden and Bald Eagles, Osprey, Whistling Swan and Great Blue Heron, besides many foreign species.

A reprint of this article may be obtained for ten cents from the National Audubon Society, 1006 Fifth Avenue, New York, N. Y.

Audubon Association of the Pacific

Organized January 25, 1917

For the Study and the Protection of Birds

- President.....Mr. B. K. Dunshee....Room 714, 245 Market St., San Francisco
- Corresponding Secretary.....Mr. Joseph J. Webb.....519 California St., San Francisco
- Treasurer.....Mrs. A. B. Stephens.....1695 Filbert St., San Francisco

Monthly meeting second Thursday, 8 P. M., Ferry Building.

Address Bulletin correspondence to Mrs. A. B. Stephens, Editor, 1695 Filbert St., San Francisco.

Membership dues, payable January 1st, \$3.00 per year.

Student memberships, \$1.50 per year.

Life memberships, \$50.00.

Members are responsible for dues until written notice of resignation is received by Treasurer.